

Sermon on **Romans 8:14-17** for Trinity Sunday – 5.30.21
St. Paul's Lutheran Church – New Ulm, MN – Pastor N. Scharf

It's graduation time. Young people are congratulated for what they've accomplished – the culmination of encouragement, effort, support, perseverance and the prayers of parents and grandparents. It's done! Way to go! But there is also the flip side of which we become more and more aware when the parties and get-togethers subside. What now?!? Where will you go? What will you do? How will you be defined? While there might be definite goals and plans, there is also uncertainty, isn't there? With God though, there is no uncertainty. He knows who he is. And he knows what he's made us and what his plan is for us – He gives us certainty in identity and purpose:

We are God's children.

Romans 8:14-17 – *“For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”*

We weren't always God's children. We were once enemies of God, dead spiritually. Conceived in sin, born in the same we were objects of wrath. But God had mercy on us. Through the Holy Spirit working through the means of grace – the Gospel in Word and Sacrament – he shared with us all that Christ had accomplished by his faithful and perfect life as our substitute. Jesus was *'led by the Spirit'* into the wilderness to be tempted and to come out victorious. All his victories were credited to you and me through the washing with water and the Word. You were baptized into Christ, clothed with Christ, connected to all he had done, credited with his perfect life before the Father. So, you too are *led by the Spirit of God* now in your life. You are not what you once were. You live for him. That's your purpose and plan.

“The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again.” If you ask someone if they are going to heaven - you often get the answer somewhere along the way, “I hope so; I've been a pretty good person.” There's no hope in that, only heat, because “pretty good” only counts when you're comparing yourself to people like me or the next guy. No, God demands perfection, like his perfect holiness. If we think that God operates like the religions of this world – “do good and hope for the best,” we'll find only hell in our future. If people are honest, they'll have to admit they've fallen short of expectations – even failed. While many are hopeful there is still fear deep down inside because they know they're not enough, they haven't done enough, and their failures and sin deserve punishment. That is slavery to sin and the only emotion that results is fear. But that's not who your God is. And that's not what his plan is for you- to be a slave to sin, guilt and shame, and to be afraid.

“The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.” Our Triune God only knows how to give good gifts to his children. When God gave to us his Holy Spirit by Word and Sacrament, the Holy Spirit brought about our *adoption* into the family of God. Our sins were washed away in waters of our baptism. We were redeemed not with gold or silver but with the holy precious blood of the sinless Son of God, Jesus Christ. We have been adopted into his family. We are children of God. We do not have to be afraid of the past or of the future as adopted children of God. I googled the richest adopted kids. It was an interesting list. Some were adopted into families worth 100 million – the Jackmans, even 700 million - Madonna. Yet we are the richest adopted kids the world will ever know – we are the **children of God**.

“Dad.....” “Dad....” “Dad....” I could hear the faint cry over the hustle and bustle going on in the kitchen, the “my little pony” noise coming from the tv room. So, I followed the faint cry up the stairs and it grew louder and louder. I said, “What!” I opened the door as Gus hollered “Dad...” one last time. “What, Gus!” Can you pack my bag for me? He was laying on the floor making no effort to accomplish this task. So, he asked if I could do it for him. Maybe it was overwhelming to him. I knew if my 7-year-old attempted to

pack his own bag for the overnight trip he would fail to pack underwear or a toothbrush. So, I obliged as he laid on the ground. Then when I was done, I looked up and he was gone. Not even a thank you. He had escaped downstairs to the TV room. How could he expect such help in view of his incapability to help me or the thanklessness he would show me for helping him? I'm his dad and I love him.

"And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." We call God not "Master," or "Judge," or fear addressing him at all, but we call him "Father." Jesus, the Son of God, our Savior, taught us to pray, "Our Father."

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. How does that work? If I look at my life, my daily life – I realize there is a good godly Romans 7 struggle there. Some things I think, say, and do confirm that I am a child of God – I turn away from sin, I read God's Word, I come to God's house not just for show, but because I need to. But then there are the arrogant times, the angry times, the short-fused impatient and loveless times, the poor priorities, and dad fails, pastor fails, husband fails, and all the sinful thoughts, words and deeds that go along with it. Falling into temptation daily seems to shout at me, "Are you really God's child?!?"

But the Spirit breaks my heart with God's Word and brings me to repentance so that I am sorry for my sin – confessing it to God in our services here, daily asking for his forgiveness daily. And by his mercy and grace you and I receive it, and he gives us faith to believe it! Yes, my new person that God has created in me through the Holy Spirit's work in Word and Sacrament says, "Yes, you are a forgiven child of God." And what gives me certainty as well is that the Word of God proclaims it to me from the pages of Scripture, through my pastors and ministers, through a Christian friend. My baptism says – yes – you have been claimed – the adoption papers have been signed by the Judge of all. The Lord's Supper hands me the receipt of Christ's body and blood shed for me.

"Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." I'm glad this verse is in Scripture because the devil loves to whisper into our ears – are you sure you are God's child? Why is life difficult for you? Why do you struggle with depression or anxiety? Why do you doubt so much? Why do you fall for temptation so much even though you try not to? Why do other people not accept God's Word? Why do they mock you for your Christian lifestyle, and priorities, and the sacrifices you make that they don't make – sacrifices of time to be in God's Word and in worship, sacrifices of treasure as you support the proclamation of the Word here and even in mission work, - sacrifices of your body and time as you help others and serve others with no guarantee of anything in return, not even a thank you at times. Are you sure? Listen to Jesus:

Jesus said, *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me"* (Luke 9:23). On another occasion he said, *"In this world you will have trouble"* (John 16:33). Peter tells us, *"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed"* (1 Peter 4:12,13). Paul and Barnabas told the Galatian congregations, *"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God"* (Acts 14:22). Jesus suffered once for our sins to pay their penalty in full. We are forgiven by the merit of Jesus Christ alone. But as we follow him, we find that we will also suffer with him. We get the same treatment he received. But Paul reminds us that suffering doesn't mean we've lost our inheritance. Just as Jesus went through suffering and is now in glory, so we also will share not only in suffering here, but in his glory. That's a done deal and coming soon!

So, what now? **Our triune God knows who he is – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – one God in three persons and three persons in one God, without mixing the persons or dividing the divine being.** And he knows what he has done for us – Created us, Redeemed us, Sanctified and set us apart as his adopted children. We are no longer slaves. We are children and we truly live – struggling each day with the strength he provides to grow in his Word and hold to it and live it, love our neighbor, follow his will and not the sinful nature's. We suffer in this life because we follow Jesus. But that also means we will live in glory just as Jesus does. We know who our God is. We know what he has done for us. We know who we are - identity and purpose: **We are Children of God.** Amen.